

NVSL Customer Service Action Plan

Issue Group: Laboratory Systems

Specific Activity Area being Addressed by this Action Plan: Develop a customer service plan for NVSL.

Safeguarding Review Recommendations Covered:

#122 – Improve customer service in NVSL laboratories.

Issue Group Findings: NVSL recognizes the importance of incorporating customer service values in all aspects of their programs. Voluntary customer service training, periodic external customer questionnaires, and customer satisfaction cards have been used by NVSL in the past and the NVSL Peer Review process includes a customer service component. Areas of excellence such as staff expertise have been identified; however, there are certain areas such as test reporting processes still in need of improvement. Inquiries are received by a variety of NVSL employees who may not have sufficient knowledge to properly route the inquiry in a timely manner. With the expanded test reporting responsibilities associated with the NAHLN, customer service expectations have multiplied. There is a need for new employee/ongoing employee training, as well as reference tools to be provided to NVSL employees. In consideration of the customer service goals, NVSL needs a process to meet needs of the NAHLN.

Proposed Actions: Actions are planned to target identified NVSL customer service concerns, to provide mechanisms to recognize evolving customer service concerns, and to measure progress.

1. Provide information on NVSL customer service values on the VS website and during new employee orientation.
2. Develop and distribute quick reference tools for use in routing inquiries in a timely manner.
3. Regularly communicate to the NVSL customers how they can assist NVSL in providing good customer service. (i.e. sample submission procedures or shipping guidance)
4. Develop mechanisms and policies to clarify and streamline the release of testing information while still meeting security and confidentiality requirements.
5. Provide ongoing customer service training and reminders to NVSL employees.
6. Develop voice mail policy for NVSL.
7. Develop a customer service measurement process.

Implementation Plan:

1. NVSL should provide information on their customer service values on the VS website and during new employee orientation.

- a. Research available brochures, etc.
- b. Include in new employee orientation
- c. Post "Internal VS Customer Service" on VS website

Responsible individual/group: NVSL Director's Office and Human Resources Unit

Target initiation date: By end of CY 2004

2. There is a need to develop and distribute quick reference tools for use in routing inquiries in a timely manner.

- a. Provide training in good customer service telephone techniques
- b. Explore current information databases to be used as an inquiry routing tool
- c. Develop quick reference sheet(s)
- d. Post/distribute tools to appropriate employees
- e. Develop a plan to maintain ensure tools are current

Responsible individual/group: NVSL Training Office and NVSL Chief Secretaries

Timeline: Tools developed by end of CY 2004; Initial training segment by CY 2004 followed by ongoing sessions

3. Regularly communicate to the NVSL customers to explain how they can assist NVSL in providing good customer service. Develop mechanisms and policies to clarify and streamline the release of testing information while still meeting security and confidentiality requirements.

- a. Review NVSL Website to assure usefulness to customers; maintain on a regular basis
- b. Develop NVSL SOP on release of NVSL information on diagnostic accession information
- c. Provide reminders of where to find instructions/information for NVSL services

Responsible individual/group: NVSL Director and IT Chief

Timeline: By end of CY 2004

4. Provide ongoing customer service training and reminders to NVSL employees.

- a. Explore appropriate customer service training options
- b. Develop a customer service training plan for NVSL

Responsible individual/group: NVSL Training Office

Timeline: Plan developed by June 2005

5. Develop voice mail policy for NVSL

Responsible individual/group: NVSL Leadership Council

Timeline: By the end of CY 2004

6. Develop a customer service measurement process.

Responsible individual/group: NVSL Government Performance Results Act Team

Timeline: By the end of FY 2005

7. Develop a NVSL policy for contact with the laboratory outside of regular business hours.

Responsible individual/group: NVSL Leadership Council

Timeline: By the end of CY 2004

Resources Needed

Training materials, brochures and outside training on customer service - \$17,500 for year one.

Statutory/Regulatory Impacts:

None.

Political Sensitivities:

Customer service problems may detract from NVSL's mission, impacting international trade or stakeholder support.

Sequencing

This implementation plan is not dependent upon other action plans, but other lab related plans will be strengthened by this one.

Partnering/Cooperation/Communication:

This action plan has communication with our partners as a primary focus.

Expected Outcome and Performance Indicators

NVSL staff will be trained in customer service and customer complaints are minimal.

Performance Indicator: Mechanism developed by GPRA Team will be used as the measure

Linkage to the VS Strategic Plan:

The following Goals and Objectives are supported by the proposed actions.

Objective 2.6 – “Improve laboratory diagnostic services, products and training to support animal disease surveillance”

Objective 5.2 – “Improve internal and external communications in order to increase awareness and enhance cooperation and communication”.